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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995

Revised estimates under sections 10, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19

Decentralization of activities and resources in the fields of natural resources and energy

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In the introduction to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995, it was indicated that the distribution of responsibilities and corresponding redeployment of resources attached to the programmes on energy and natural resources were the subject of consultations between the Secretariat entities concerned and that the outcome of those consultations would be reflected in a report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. The present report deals with the distribution of responsibilities between the Secretariat entities concerned and proposes the redeployment of posts and related resources from the Department for Development Support and Management Services to the five regional commissions. Subject to the approval of the Assembly, the Secretary-General would intend to implement the decentralization measures on 1 July 1994.

2. The following proposals for decentralization have been formulated with three basic principles in mind. Firstly, service-delivery to the recipient countries should be managed in a location as close to the recipient as possible. By virtue of their being located in the midst of the developing countries, and in effect being reflections of their political will, the regional commissions are in an excellent position to know and appreciate the countries' development imperatives and needs. Moreover, they would normally be able to deliver services in the most cost-effective manner.

3. Secondly, decentralization should be conceived of in a holistic manner. The exercise should, therefore, take into account the roles of the various entities concerned and ensure that maximum use is made of their comparative

advantages. Decentralization should not mean fragmentation and loss of critical mass. This means both that there should be linkage and coordination of the work of the regional commissions and central programmes, and that the experience and unique characteristics of Headquarters, deriving from its central position and global outreach, should contribute to the decentralization strategy. The Secretariat in New York has successfully provided technical cooperation services for many years and has built up a large store of global as well as region- and country-specific knowledge and experience. Moreover, because of its global reach, it is uniquely able to cross-reference, integrate and disseminate experience throughout the developing world, thereby maximizing the possibilities for developing countries to benefit from each others' experience. Similarly, deriving from its global policy-making function, it has an indispensable role to play in coordinating the global technical assistance work of the Secretariat, developing policies and ensuring the maintenance of standards and consistency. At the operational level, it also has the role of providing certain expertise that, for reasons of cost-effectiveness, is not possessed by the regional commissions.

4. The regional commissions, therefore, should be viewed as the regional arms of a single integrated United Nations programme in the socio-economic field rather than as disparate, separate entities. Their participation in and contributions towards the global work of entities at Headquarters should be enhanced and the mechanism for programmatic interaction strengthened.

5. Thirdly, decentralization of operational responsibilities from the Secretariat in New York to the regional commissions will require closer integration of the work programmes of the commissions into the general collaborative framework of the United Nations, with suitable modifications to meet regional differences and requirements, and increased cooperation at a technical level with expertise from Headquarters. For the Secretariat in New York, decentralization will mean a change in focus as well. While it should continue to execute projects in these fields, it would also provide assistance of a specialized nature that cannot be provided by the regional commissions. Such assistance might, for example, be in a field for which demand in any one region is not strong enough to warrant assignment of an expert but which is required on a global basis, or it should involve a higher level of expertise, which could be offered on a normal basis and/or function as a technical resource for the experts based in the regions. In addition, the Secretariat in New York would assume primary responsibility for programme management and, on behalf of the Secretary-General, for policy development.

6. Decentralization is thus an opportunity to ensure that the organizational and functional structure of the Secretariat is enhanced so as to maximize the effectiveness of the United Nations, focusing on opportunities for improvement in the impact of the programmes of the United Nations.

7. Technical cooperation activities in the field of natural resources and energy lend themselves especially well to the above approaches. Decentralization of activities in these areas should lead to a single integrated technical cooperation programme, with projects executed by both the Department for Development Support and Management Services and the regional commissions, according to their comparative advantages. The programme in this area will be

managed by a management board composed of the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions and chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Development Support and Management Services, who will be responsible for overall coordination and oversight. This Board, which would meet semi-annually, would review the United Nations annual programme for the natural resources and energy sectors and monitor and evaluate progress and developments. All available expertise at Headquarters and in the regional commissions would be at the disposal of the entire programme.

8. To implement this, it is proposed to redeploy from the Department for Development Support and Management Services to the regional commissions nine Professional posts and nine General Service posts to allow for joint programmes between the commissions and the Department. This proposal is based on the following assumptions:

(a) The posts would be used by the regional commissions in support of activities in the fields of natural resources and energy;

(b) Executing agency responsibility for national projects would remain with the Department for Development Support and Management Services.

9. This would have the advantage of engaging the regional commissions far more closely in the technical cooperation activities being undertaken in their respective regions; facilitating exchange of information and experience in operational activities through close cooperation between advisers at Headquarters and the regions; and achieving economies in travel costs, in so far as travel by a regional adviser to a project site within the region, or outside the region, would be less costly than travel undertaken by a Headquarters-based adviser.

10. Global responsibilities for water, now shared between the Department for Development Support and Management Services and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), have been entrusted to UNEP. Similarly, global responsibilities for minerals have been entrusted to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) within existing resources.

11. This allocation of functions would guide the distribution of responsibilities for the substantive servicing of the Committee on Natural Resources, which has standing agenda items related to overall issues of natural resources, water and minerals. The regional commissions would be called upon to make a greater contribution to the work of the Committee from their different regional perspectives.

12. Coordination of the provision of support for the Committee should be exercised by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, in accordance with its terms of reference, which already carries out similar functions in relation to intergovernmental bodies with related mandates, such as the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development.

13. The ultimate responsibility for the execution of national technical cooperation projects would remain with the Department for Development Support and Management Services, and thus no change in mandate governing the provision of technical cooperation will be necessary; however, joint implementation modalities would be established and set out in agreements, adjusted on a case-by-case basis. The Department would be involved in negotiations with funding organizations for given national projects, and the regional commissions would be closely involved in the provision of technical support to the project themselves. This would ensure the maintenance of the necessary critical mass of experienced technical expertise to deliver support to technical cooperation activities, while also leading to economies of scale in that the full use of regional advisers at the regional commissions would reduce travel costs. Moreover, each regional commission would have access to a pool of expertise in fields not covered by their regional advisers.

14. Similarly, advisers from the Department for Development Support and Management Services would provide technical support as might be required in developing and implementing regional programmes in these fields, for which the regional commissions would continue to have responsibility as executing agencies.

15. The current and future distribution of resources in the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 for the programmes of work in the area of natural resources and energy is described below. Details are provided in annexes I and II to the present document.

Department for Development Support and Management Services

16. In the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995, 1 post at the D-2 level, 15 posts at the Professional level and 23 posts at the General Service level, together with funds for travel ($120,700), consultants ($112,000) and expert groups ($52,300) were approved for the Department for Development Support and Management Services, pending proposals by the Secretary-General on decentralization. Of these posts and funds, it is proposed that 9 Professional and 9 General Service posts, $67,500 of the resources for travel and $55,000 of the resources for consultants be redeployed to the regional commissions. Details of the proposed distribution of resources between budget sections are provided in annex III to the present document. Proposals for the redeployment of the D-2 post are addressed separately in the report of the Secretary-General on the reorganization of the Department of Administration and Management (see A/C.5/48/72).

17. The six Professional posts which would remain would comprise the minimal critical mass needed to provide substantive support to overall planning and management activities in natural resources and energy, in line with the mandate of the Department for Development Support and Management Services. Five posts would comprise substantive expertise in natural resources and energy planning and management, environment, water resources, energy resources and mineral resources.

18. These five posts would be directly involved in activities in natural resources and energy to be carried out as set forth in the medium-term plan for

the period 1992-1997, as revised (A/47/6/Rev.1), and in the programme budget, that is, international cooperation, the provision of substantive support and preparation of parliamentary documentation in relation to two subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council, the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development.

19. The staff members occupying these posts would undertake the preparation and publication of recurrent publications, such as the Natural Resources Forum, the Newsletter on activities of international river basin commissions and the Newsletter on operational activities in the field of energy. They would be responsible for providing inputs into reports required for the Commission on Sustainable Development, the report of the Secretary-General to the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and various ad hoc requests and requirements. They would also assist in coordinating the joint programming activities described above.

20. The staff member occupying the sixth post would be responsible for activities in cartography, surveying, mapping and remote sensing, including the provision of substantive support to and preparation of parliamentary documentation for the United Nations Conference on Geographical Names and the regional cartographic conferences; ad hoc expert group meetings; the preparation of the recurrent World Cartography Bulletin and the Newsletter on the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, and the publication of all technical material.

Economic Commission for Africa

21. Current resources approved for the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in the programme budget for 1994-1995 for natural resources and energy comprise 13 Professional and 9 General Service posts, $32,100 for consultants, $25,200 for ad hoc expert groups, $124,000 for travel and $20,900 for external printing. The resources proposed for redeployment to ECA consist of 1 D-1, 1 P-4 and 2 General Service posts, $12,500 for consultant services and $15,000 for travel of staff.

22. The additional resources would be utilized to support the requirements of its biennial work programme outlined in paragraph 15A.48 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995. In particular, the work in the field of energy will be expanded to include such areas as energy planning and management, energy forecasting, new and renewable sources of energy and development of small-scale fossil fuel.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

23. Current resources approved for the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in the programme budget for 1994-1995 for natural resources and energy comprise 19 Professional and 11 General Service posts, $18,700 for consultants, $42,600 for ad hoc expert groups, $66,600 for travel and $73,000 for external printing. The resources proposed for redeployment to ESCAP consist of 1 P-5, 1 P-4 and 2 General Service posts, $12,500 for consultant services and $15,000 for travel of staff.

24. The resources redeployed to ESCAP would be utilized to support the requirements of its biennial work programme outlined in paragraph 16.30 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995, especially as regards remote sensing, the Geographic Information System and water resources development.

Economic Commission for Europe

25. Current resources approved for the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in the programme budget for 1994-1995 for energy comprise 9 Professional and 7 General Service posts, $31,100 for consultants and $46,300 for travel. The resources proposed for redeployment to ECE consist of 1 P-5 and 1 General Service post, $5,000 for consultant services and $7,500 for travel of staff. They would be utilized to support the work under the auspices of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy for the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

26. Current resources approved for the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in the programme budget for 1994-1995 for natural resources and energy comprise 8 Professional and 5 General Service posts, $17,700 for consultants, $17,400 for ad hoc expert groups and $41,100 for travel of staff. The resources proposed for redeployment to ECLAC consist of 1 P-4, 1 P-3 and 2 General Service posts, $12,500 for consultant services and $15,000 for travel of staff. These would be utilized to develop proposals for the improvement of the existing institutional and legal framework for the planning and management of water resources in the region and for assisting in the implementation of recommendations concerning fresh water resources adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

27. Current resources approved for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in the programme budget for 1994-1995 for natural resources and energy comprise 7 Professional and 5 General Service posts, $53,000 for consultants, $73,200 for ad hoc expert groups and $51,900 for travel. The resources proposed for redeployment to ESCWA consist of 1 P-4, 1 P-3, 2 General Service posts, $12,500 for consultant services and $15,000 for travel of staff. These would be utilized to enhance work on the assessment of water quality, focusing on issues relating to sea-water intrusion, and to review training programmes on drilling and assessment of reserves.

28. The decentralization of activities in the natural resources and energy areas as proposed in the present report would involve the redeployment of resources between sections of the programme budget for 1994-1995 as follows:

Section	(Thousands of US dollars)
10	(2 872.0)
15	606.4
16	550.6
17	291.3
18	594.4
19	551.8
Total	(277.5)

ANNEX I

Proposed distribution of resources currently frozen in the Department for Development Support and Management Services in the area of energy and natural resources

	Currently in DDSMS	Proposed distribution					
		ECA	ESCAP	ECLAC	ESCWA	ECE	DDSMS
Professional posts	15	2	2	2	2	1	6
General Service posts	23	2	2	2	2	1	14
Consultants (thousands of US$)	112.0	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	5.0	57.0
Expert groups (thousands of US$)	52.3	-	-	-	-	-	52.3
Travel (thousands of US$)	120.7	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	7.5	53.2

ANNEX II

Proposed distribution of posts currently frozen in the Department for Development Support and Management Services in the field of energy and natural resources

Level	Currently in DDSMS	Proposed distribution					
		ECA	ESCAP	ECLAC	ESCWA	ECE	DDSMS
D-1	2	1	-	-	-	-	1
P-5	3	-	1	-	-	1	1
P-4	4	1	1	1	1	-	-
P-3	5	-	-	1	1	-	3
P-2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	15	2	2	2	2	1	6
General Service	23	2	2	2	2	1	14
Grand total	38	4	4	4	4	2	20

ANNEX III

Proposed distribution of resources currently frozen in the Department for Development Support and Management Services in the area of energy and natural resources between budget sections

(Thousands of US dollars)

	Currently in DDSMS	Proposed distribution					
		ECA	ESCAP	ECLAC	ESCWA	ECE	DDSMS
Staff costs	5 627.1	578.9	523.1	566.9	524.3	278.8	3 155.1
Consultants	112.0	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	5.0	57.0
Expert groups	52.3	-	-	-	-	-	52.3
Travel	120.7	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	7.5	53.2
Total	5 912.1	606.4	550.6	594.4	551.8	291.3	3 317.6